

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. Software for use on a client device that is configured for communications with at least one remote source of advertisements via a communications network, comprising:

an advertisement download function that downloads advertisements from the at least one remote source, during one or more advertisement download sessions;

an advertisement storage function that stores the downloaded advertisements on a storage medium associated with the client device;

an advertisement display function that effects display of at least selected ones of the stored advertisements on a display associated with the client device;

an audit function that compiles audit data including software usage data reflecting usage of the software by the user during a prescribed audit interval;

an audit data transmit function that transmits the audit data to a prescribed server system, wherein:

the audit data transmit function generates a send audit data display window that requests the user's permission to transmit the audit data to the prescribed server system; and

the audit data transmit function transmits the audit data only in response to a user's grant of permission to do so.

2. The software as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the audit data is maintained as a log that is rotated at prescribed rollover intervals.

3. The software as set forth in Claim 2, wherein the prescribed rollover intervals correspond to the prescribed audit intervals.

4. The software as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the audit data transmit function is activated in response to a send audit data request transmitted by the prescribed server system.

5. The software as set forth in Claim 4, wherein:

the prescribed server system includes an auditing manager function; and

the auditing manager function generates the send audit data request in accordance with a client auditing policy under which send audit data requests are transmitted to a statistical sampling of a population of client devices, at prescribed times.

6. The software as set forth in Claim 4, wherein:

the prescribed server system includes an auditing manager function; and

the auditing manager function generates the send audit data request in accordance with a client auditing policy under which send audit data requests are transmitted to random ones of a population of client devices, at prescribed times.

7. The software as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the audit data further includes features of the software used by the user during the prescribed audit interval.

8. The software as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the audit data further includes user demographic data.

9. The software as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the audit data further includes features of the software used by the user during the prescribed audit interval.

10. The software as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the audit data further includes settings selected by the user during the prescribed audit interval.

11. The software as set forth in Claim 1, further comprising a custom installer function that generates a distributor identifier that identifies a distributor that distributed the software for use on the client device.

12. The software as set forth in Claim 12, wherein the audit data further includes the distributor identifier.

13. The software as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the audit data further includes ad-related statistical data relating to the downloaded advertisements.

14. The software as set forth in Claim 13, wherein the ad-related statistical data includes display event-related data regarding advertisements that were displayed during the prescribed audit interval.

15. The software as set forth in Claim 13, wherein the ad-related statistical data facilitates analysis of the effectiveness of the software regarding presentation of advertisements to the user.

16. The software as set forth in Claim 14, wherein the display event-related data includes display time data for advertisements that were displayed during the prescribed audit interval.

17. The software as set forth in Claim 14, wherein the ad-related statistical data further includes clickthrough data regarding each advertisement that was clicked on by the user during the prescribed audit interval.

18. The software as set forth in Claim 13, wherein the ad-related statistical data includes clickthrough data regarding each advertisement that was clicked on by the user during the prescribed audit interval.

19. The software as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the prescribed server system and the at least one remote source are components of an advertisement distribution server system.

20. The software as set forth in Claim 19, wherein the advertisement distribution server system is managed by a producer of the software.

21. The software as set forth in Claim 19, wherein the advertisement distribution server system is managed by a distributor of the software.

22. The software as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the communications network is the Internet.

23. The software as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the software is e-mail software.

24. Software for use on a client device that is configured for communications with at least one remote source of advertisements via a communications network, comprising:

- an advertisement download function that downloads advertisements from the at least one remote source, during one or more advertisement download sessions;

- an advertisement storage function that stores the downloaded advertisements on a storage medium associated with the client device;

- an advertisement display function that effects display of at least selected ones of the stored advertisements on a display associated with the client device;

- an audit function that compiles audit data including software usage data reflecting features of the software used by the user during a prescribed audit interval;

- an audit data transmit function that transmits the audit data to a prescribed server system, wherein:

- the audit data transmit function generates a send audit data display window that requests the user's permission to transmit the audit data to the prescribed server system; and

- the audit data transmit function transmits the audit data only in response to a user's grant of permission to do so.

25. The software as set forth in Claim 24, wherein the audit data is maintained as a log that is rotated at prescribed rollover intervals.

26. The software as set forth in Claim 25, wherein the prescribed rollover intervals correspond to the prescribed audit intervals.

27. The software as set forth in Claim 24, wherein the audit data transmit function is activated in response to a send audit data request transmitted by the prescribed server system.

28. The software as set forth in Claim 27, wherein:

- the prescribed server system includes an auditing manager function; and

the auditing manager function generates the send audit data request in accordance with a client auditing policy under which send audit data requests are transmitted to a statistical sampling of a population of client devices, at prescribed times.

29. The software as set forth in Claim 27, wherein:

the prescribed server system includes an auditing manager function; and

the auditing manager function generates the send audit data request in accordance with a client auditing policy under which send audit data requests are transmitted to random ones of a population of client devices, at prescribed times.

30. The software as set forth in Claim 24, wherein the audit data further includes user demographic data.

31. The software as set forth in Claim 24, wherein the audit data further includes settings selected by the user during the prescribed audit interval.

32. The software as set forth in Claim 24, further comprising a custom installer function that generates a distributor identifier that identifies a distributor that distributed the software for use on the client device.

33. The software as set forth in Claim 32, wherein the audit data further includes the distributor identifier.

34. The software as set forth in Claim 24, wherein the audit data further includes ad-related statistical data relating to the downloaded advertisements.

35. The software as set forth in Claim 34, wherein the ad-related statistical data includes display event-related data regarding advertisements that were displayed during the prescribed audit interval.

36. The software as set forth in Claim 34, wherein the ad-related statistical data facilitates analysis of the effectiveness of the software regarding presentation of advertisements to the user.

37. The software as set forth in Claim 35, wherein the display event-related data includes display time data for advertisements that were displayed during the prescribed audit interval.

38. The software as set forth in Claim 35, wherein the ad-related statistical data further includes clickthrough data regarding each advertisement that was clicked on by the user during the prescribed audit interval.

39. The software as set forth in Claim 34, wherein the ad-related statistical data includes clickthrough data regarding each advertisement that was clicked on by the user during the prescribed audit interval.

40. The software as set forth in Claim 24, wherein the prescribed server system and the at least one remote source are components of an advertisement distribution server system.

41. The software as set forth in Claim 40, wherein the advertisement distribution server system is managed by a producer of the software.

42. The software as set forth in Claim 40, wherein the advertisement distribution server system is managed by a distributor of the software.

43. The software as set forth in Claim 24, wherein the communications network is the Internet.

44. The software as set forth in Claim 24, wherein the software is e-mail software.

45. The software as set forth in Claim 1, further comprising an installer function for installing the software on a computer-readable storage medium.

46. The software as set forth in Claim 1, further comprising an installer function for installing the software on the client device.

47. The software as set forth in Claim 1, further comprising an installer function for installing the software on a computer-readable storage medium associated with the client device.

48. The software as set forth in Claim 24, further comprising an installer function for installing the software on a computer-readable storage medium.

49. The software as set forth in Claim 24, further comprising an installer function for installing the software on the client device.

50. The software as set forth in Claim 24, further comprising an installer function for installing the software on a computer-readable storage medium associated with the client device.

51. The software as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the advertisement display function effects display of the at least selected ones of the stored advertisements when the client device is offline.

52. The software as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the advertisement display function effects display of the at least selected ones of the stored advertisements while the user is composing and/or reading e-mail messages.

53. The software as set forth in Claim 24, wherein the advertisement display function effects display of the at least selected ones of the stored advertisements when the client device is offline.

54. The software as set forth in Claim 24, wherein the advertisement display function effects display of the at least selected ones of the stored advertisements while the user is composing and/or reading e-mail messages.

55. The software as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the audit data transmit function is activated randomly.

56. The software as set forth in Claim 1, wherein the audit data transmit function is activated at random times.

57. The software as set forth in Claim 24, wherein the audit data transmit function is activated randomly.

58. The software as set forth in Claim 24, wherein the audit data transmit function is activated at random times.